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Punjab abolishes regularisation law to do away with pension

New recruitment to be made on 'lump sum pay package'; ordinance laid in assembly for legislation three days after promulgation

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: In light of a new ordinance, the Punjab government will now recruit employees on the basis of a lump sum pay package instead of making appointments on the basic pay scale, which means such employees will not be entitled to pensions anymore.

The Punjab Regularisation of Service (Repeal) Ordinance 2025 was promulgated on Oct 31 to repeal the Punjab Regularisation of Service Act 2018 and it was tabled in the Punjab Assembly as the house convened on Monday.

The reason behind the ordinance was that the provincial government intended to shift the mode of appointment from basic pay scale to a lump sum pay package so that the financial burden on the exchequer could be reduced which was borne by the government in the form of pensions.

By doing away with the 2018 law, the new ordinance, with immediate effect, has blocked the regularisation of services of contractual employees after four years in service.

The ordinance, however, protected all the decisions or actions taken under the repealed act, saying that "anything done or action taken under any provision of the repealed act, shall continue to have effect as if the said act had not been repealed".

The Punjab Regularisation of Service Act 2018 had offered that any person appointed on contract, immediately before the commencement of the act, shall be deemed to have been validly appointed and such appointment shall not be called in question.

The repealed act stated that a contract employee, who has been continuously serving for a period of four years shall be eligible to be considered for appointment on a regular basis if a regular vacancy is allocated for initial recruitment, subject to the fact that the employee is qualified for the post and shows satisfactory performance.

The revoked law had also given a procedure for the regularisation of contractual employees. It required that a contract employee be recommended by a specifically constituted commission to the appointing authority for regularisation.

The repealed act had also given a complete framework for appointments, termination of contract, determination of seniority, pay fixation, option for regularisation, legal framework, appeal or review, rules, removal of difficulties and savings.

Under the new policy being envisaged in the new act to be legislated by the Punjab Assembly, departmental recruitments will be made on a lump-sum pay package instead of the basic pay scale. According to the decision, the employees recruited on contract will stay on the contract mode for the rest of their service.

Officials say employees appointed on contract will not be entitled to a pension, as the move aims to reduce the financial burden on the provincial treasury caused by pension liabilities.

The ordinance caused some confusion as well about the fate of contractual employees appointed before the ordinance.

Some officials said the new ordinance did not impact them, while others claimed this would also affect the regularisation of the existing employees.

Law Secretary Asif Bilal Lodhi did not respond despite multiple attempts while Regulations Secretary Mian Abrar Ahmed confirmed that the law was repealed but refused to share further details about the impact of the new ordinance despite repeated requests.

A senior civil servant said the government should either offer regular job options or offer market-competitive salaries to its employees, adding that such a move would strengthen the quality of its human resources.

Pakistan eyes 2026 launch of first Chinese submarine

- Part of $5bn arms deal, move will boost Beijing's bid to counter India
- Islamabad will get eight Hangor-class submarines by 2028

BEIJING: The Pakistan Navy expects its first Chinese-designed submarine to enter active service next year, the country's top admiral told Chinese state media, bolstering Beijing's bid to counter regional rival India and project power toward the Middle East.

A deal under which Islamabad will take delivery of eight Hangor-class submarines by 2028 is "progressing smoothly", Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf told the *Global Times* in an interview, adding that the submarines would boost Pakistan's ability to patrol the North Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.

The update on the Chinese submarine deal follows the Pakistan Air Force using Chinese-made J-10 fighter jets in May to shoot down an Indian Air Force Rafale aircraft, made by France.

The altercation between the nuclear-armed neighbours surprised many in the military community and raised questions over the superiority of Western hardware over Chinese alternatives.

Under the terms of the submarine agreement — reportedly worth up to $5 billion — the first four diesel-electric attack submarines will be built in China, with the remaining vessels assembled in Pakistan to improve its technical capabilities.

Pakistan has already launched three of the submarines into China's Yangtze River from a shipyard in the central province of Hubei.

"Chinese-origin platforms and equipment have been reliable, technologically advanced and well-suited to Pakistan Navy's operational requirements," Admiral Ashraf told the newspaper, which is published by the ruling Communist Party's *People's Daily*.

"As modern warfare evolves, emerging technologies such as unmanned systems, AI and advanced electronic warfare systems are becoming increasingly important. The Pakistan Navy is focusing on these technologies and exploring collaboration with China," Admiral Ashraf was also quoted as saying.

Islamabad has long been Beijing's top arms customer, and over the 2020-2024 period bought over 60 per cent of China's weapons exports, data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute shows.

Billion-dollar build up

Along with billions in arms sales, Beijing has heavily invested in building out its connections to the Arabian Sea through the 3,000-kilometre long economic corridor stretching from China's Xinjiang to Pakistan's deep-water port of Gwadar.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), part of President Xi Jinping's flagship 'Belt and Road' infrastructure initiative, aims to secure a route for the world's largest energy importer to bring in supplies from the Middle East.

The initiative also extends China's sphere of influence toward Afghanistan and Iran and onto Central Asia, and effectively encircles India, given Beijing's ties to the junta in Myanmar and good relations with Bangladesh.

India currently operates three indigenously developed nuclear-powered submarines, along with three classes of diesel-electric attack submarines acquired or developed over decades with France, Germany, and Russia.

"This cooperation [with China] goes beyond hardware; it reflects a shared strategic outlook, mutual trust, and a long-standing partnership," Admiral Ashraf said.

"In the coming decade, we expect this relationship to grow, encompassing not only shipbuilding and training, but also enhanced interoperability, research, technology sharing and industrial collaboration."—Reuters

KARACHI: A vendor sells dry fruits at his shop as their demand has increased with the onset of winter.—Online

ECP sets 23rd for by-polls in three Punjab constituencies

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Monday set November 23 as the new polling date for by-elections in two National Assembly and one provincial assembly constituencies in Punjab.

One of these constituencies is in Lahore — the hometown of PM Shehbaz Sharif — and another in Mianwali, the hometown of former prime minister Imran Khan.

These constituencies include NA-129 (Lahore), NA-65 (Wazirabad), and PP-87 (Mianwali).

The by-elections in all three constituencies were initially scheduled for Sept 18, according to a schedule issued on July 29, but were postponed due to flood-related issues in Punjab.

"….the Commission, after taking into consideration the prevailing situation, has concluded that due to non-availability of polling staff, the requisite number of law enforcement personnel, damaged infrastructure, and the disenfranchisement of voters due to displacement, election cannot be conducted with the optimum level of security as mandated under Article 218(3) of the Constitution.

The Commission, in exercise of powers under Section 58 of the Elections Act, 2017, read with Articles 218(3) and 254 of the Constitution, hereby postpones the election programme of above-mentioned constituencies. It shall resume from the stage at which it was postponed once the situation normalises in the public interest, an order issued by the ECP on Sept 4 stated.

Under the same order, polls for nine National and provincial assembly costituencies were postponed.

The seat for NA-129 (Lahore) fell vacant following the death of former Punjab governor Mian Azhar, while the seats for NA-65 (Wazirabad) and PP-87 (Mianwali) became vacant due to the disqualification of Ahmad Chatta, MNA, and Ahmad Khan, respectively.—Iftikhar A. Khan

Balochistan request to delay LG polls turned down

By Saleem Shahid

QUETTA: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has rejected the Balochistan government's request to postpone local bodies elections in the Quetta district, announcing that they will be held on Dec 28.

The Balochistan government formally wrote a letter to the provincial election commissioner, requesting the postponement of the Quetta Municipal Corporation (QMC) elections, citing harsh winter weather and the prevailing law and order situation in the city.

"The election commission after reviewing the government's letter has rejected the request for postponement of local bodies' elections in Quetta and decided to hold [them] according to the … schedule announced by the … commission," an ECP official said.

The electoral body, in a separate announcement, confirmed that it has turned down the provincial government's request to delay the polls in Quetta.

"After due consideration, it [was] decided [that] the elections will proceed strictly according to the announced schedule," the announcement read.

According to the schedule announced by the ECP, elections for the general seats in the urban union councils of Quetta district will be held on Dec 28.

Nomination papers

Nomination papers can be submitted to the respective returning officers from Nov 13 to 17, while the initial list of candidates will be published on Nov 18.

The scrutiny of nomination papers will take place from Nov 19 to 24. Appeals against the returning officers' decisions on the acceptance or rejection of papers can be filed with the appellate tribunal until No 28, which will decide on these appeals by Dec 3.

The revised list of candidates will be issued on Dec 4, followed by the final list and withdrawals on Dec 5. Election symbols will be allotted on Dec 6, and polling is scheduled for Dec 28 (Sunday) from 8am to 4pm. Official results are expected to be announced by Dec 31.

The ECP has directed the Balochistan government to ensure foolproof security arrangements for conducting the local bodies' election in Quetta district in a peaceful, transparent, and fair manner.

Injectable polio vaccine debuted in Punjab

- Provides better protection than oral variety
- Children up to 15 to be immunised as older kids now identified as key to transmission
- Drive to be extended to other high-risk urban centres, such as Karachi, Hyderabad
- Police rescue polio team detained at private school

By Ikram Junaidi & Asif Chaudhry

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: Health authorities in Punjab on Monday launched a massive Extended-Age Fractional IPV Campaign, aiming to vaccinate up to 2 million children with an injectable polio vaccine as part of a critical effort to eradicate the virus from its last reservoir in the region.

The campaign, which will run until Nov 12, targets children aged 4 months to 15 years, across 122 high-risk union councils (UCs) in Lahore.

Officials hope the drive will interrupt the transmission of poliovirus detected in the city's environmental samples, a key step toward declaring the entire province polio-free.

The fractional inactivated polio vaccine (fIPV) campaign was formally launched by Punjab Minister for Health and Population Khwaja Imran Nazeer and Health & Population Department Secretary Nadia Saqib.

The initiative follows a recommendation from the global Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on Polio, which identified that while children under 5 are mostly protected, the virus is now being spread by older, unvaccinated or under-vaccinated children.

"Our priority is to remain vigilant and continue building population immunity until transmission ends everywhere in Pakistan," Mr Nazeer said at the launch ceremony. "Children who repeatedly miss vaccination remain our biggest vulnerability. Every single child must be vaccinated in every campaign."

The campaign is a significant logistical undertaking, with approximately 10,848 frontline workers participating. This force includes 2,700 skilled vaccinators, 2,700 team assistants, 4,800 community mobilisers, 496 area in charges and 122 UC medical officers.

Former health minister Dr Nadeem Jan, while talking to *Dawn*, called the decision a positive step that should have been taken much earlier.

"IPV enhances individual protection of a child and further transmission of virus through child is stopped," Mr Jan said. "Moreover it also saves child from chances of vaccine derived paralysis and keeps child safe." He recommended that at least two or three similar rounds should be held in each targeted block to fully eradicate the virus.

Lahore is considered the only remaining polio reservoir in Punjab. According to a polio programme expert, DNA sampling indicates the virus circulating in Punjab has not travelled from other hotspot areas like southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"It has been decided to start with Lahore as if Lahore block will be cured the whole Punjab province will be declared polio free," the expert said, noting that South KP remains a more problematic area.

The oral polio vaccine (OPV) remains in a child's gut and stops the further spread of the virus, while the injectable polio vaccine (IPV) offers complete protection from infection. TAG suggested using IPV in reservoirs that were less severely affected.

Secretary Saqib emphasised that the fIPV provides an essential boost to immunity. "The fIPV provides an additional layer of protection by boosting immunity, especially where environmental virus detections are recorded," she said.

She highlighted that Punjab has already conducted four national immunisation campaigns this year.

However, the campaign faces significant challenges. Officials acknowledged there is resistance to injectable vaccines, similar to what was encountered during a recent HPV vaccine drive. There is also a limited supply of equipment, with only 4,000 specialised injectors available, each costing $500.

Following the Lahore campaign, similar drives are planned for other high-risk urban blocks, including Karachi, Hyderabad and Chaman.

Polio workers rescued

Separately, police on Monday rescued a group of female polio workers who were attacked and detained by staff at a private school in Gulberg Town, Lahore.

The health workers had arrived at the school in Union Council 31 to administer polio vaccines to children when the confrontation occurred.

The school's management refused to allow the vaccinations and the workers were assaulted and locked in a room.

One of the workers sustained a head injury, and others were reportedly beaten when they attempted to help their colleague.

Video clips later emerged showing the women crying and pleading for help during the incident.

The police response was swift following the Punjab CM's intervention, which included instructions to apprehend the suspects and pursue criminal charges.

Later, Misri Shah police filed a case against the school staff.

SC judge recuses from Sindh Governor House access case

- Constitutional Bench issues notices to speaker, his principal secretary
- Case to be taken up again after reconstitution of bench
- Tessori had challenged SHC order allowing speaker access to office

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi on Monday recused himself from the Supreme Court's five-judge constitutional bench hearing a controversy over granting complete access to the Sindh Assembly speaker to the offices and chambers of the Governor House in the absence of the governor.

Abid Shahid Zuberi, the counsel for Governor Kamran Khan Tessori, told *Dawn* that Justice Abbasi had expressed his inability to hear the matter and withdrew from the bench.

The five-judge CB, headed by Justice Aminuddin Khan, had taken up an appeal filed by Governor Tessori against the Sindh High Court's June 23 interim order allowing the provincial assembly speaker to use the offices and chambers of the Governor House. The bench also includes Justices Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Shakeel Ahmad, and Aamir Farooq.

The bench postponed further proceedings indefinitely before issuing notices to Sindh Assembly Speaker Syed Awais Qadir Shah and his principal secretary. The case will be taken up again after the bench is reconstituted.

During the hearing, Justice Aminuddin suggested to counsel Zuberi that both sides sit together and resolve the disagreement.

Mr Zuberi responded that the SHC had decided the matter in a single hearing, adding that the petitioners had appeared before the court on the given date, but the decision was made without notice to them.

In June this year, the SHC had declared unconstitutional several attempts by the governor's principal secretary to deny the speaker access to the Governor House. The high court held that the speaker, while performing functions as acting governor, could not be denied access to the Governor House for official business. It directed the secretary to provide immediate access to all offices and chambers at the Governor House.

The SHC also observed that, prima facie, the principal secretary had violated the Constitution by refusing access to the acting governor.

Speaker Shah had told the SHC that he had assumed the role of acting governor on June 2, following Mr Tessori's departure abroad.

In his petition before the apex court, Governor Tessori contended that he had been impleaded in his personal capacity by the speaker, although Article 248 of the Constitution clearly provides that no civil proceedings may be initiated against a governor in his personal capacity unless notice is served at least 60 days before the institution of proceedings.

He argued that the speaker's plea for unobstructed access to the Governor House was untenable under the Governor's Salaries, Allowances and Privileges Order, 1975, which makes it clear that an acting governor is not entitled to the use of the Governor House, as it remains the official residence of the sitting governor.

The petition alleged that the speaker had misled the SHC by not disclosing the 1975 order. It added that Article 104 of the Constitution only allows the speaker to perform the functions of the governor during the latter's absence, not to enjoy all the privileges and benefits attached to the office.

The petition argued that the SHC's ex parte mandatory order, issued at an interlocutory stage on the first date of hearing, was contrary to established legal principles. Moreover, the high court's directive to send copies of its order to the Sindh chief secretary and president's principal secretary for implementation was described as unwarranted, given that the opposing party had not been heard.

The petition claimed that the allegations made in the speaker's plea, the media trial that followed, and the manner in which the plea was filed and decided reflected "malice and propaganda" against the governor.

It maintained that the question of rights and privileges of an acting governor remains a recurring constitutional issue that arises whenever a speaker assumes charge in the governor's absence. The petition urged the Supreme Court to settle the matter once and for all.